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PIPELINE SAFETY TRUST FACTSHEET: Changes Needed to Protect the Public and the Environment From Pipeline Spills and Leaks

Pipeline releases pose a serious threat to public safety, the environment, and private property. Though there have been programmatic improvements in recent years, the federal agency overseeing pipelines (the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA) needs to address regulatory gaps, provide greater information to the public on nearby pipelines, pursue meaningful enforcement and penalty collection against companies with ongoing or serious regulatory violations, and distribute technical assistance grants to assist the public's understanding of – and increase public involvement in -- pipeline safety.

What is Needed?

During the 2006 Pipeline Safety Act reauthorization:

- Ensure public availability of maps showing the locations of transmission pipelines through communities to enhance safety, education, involvement, and the prevention of pipeline damage
- Provide web-based publicly available information on federal and state pipeline inspection and enforcement activities, and an annual report to Congress on civil and criminal enforcement. Allow qualified state regulators to pursue enforcement on interstate pipelines
- Expand High Consequence Areas so they include cultural and historic sites, parks, wildlife refuges, and fishable and swimmable waters
- Reauthorize and ensure that Congress appropriates money for Pipeline Safety Information Grants (Sec. 9 of the Pipeline Safety Act of 2002) to: 1) enable the public to hire technical experts who will participate in standards development, technical report analysis, and helping write regulatory comments; 2) provide resources for local and state-level multi-stakeholder pipeline committees; and 3) fund other technical assistance needs approved by PHMSA
- Ensure issuance of a distribution pipeline integrity management program by a date certain
- Further pipeline damage prevention by encouraging greater enforcement and data collection at the state level, and formation of the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance.

Regulatory actions that:

- Require companies to report over-pressurization events to PHMSA
- Require the use of excess flow valves for gas distribution pipelines in locations that meet appropriate technical and safety criteria
- Require pipelines that experience a change in service to have appropriate reporting and upgrade standards
- Require leak detection system performance standards, and location (e.g., near rivers) and performance standards for remote/automatic pipeline shut-off when liquid pipeline releases are detected
- Remove certain pipeline exemptions from the regulations, especially the one for "low-stress" oil pipelines

The **Pipeline Safety Trust** promotes fuel transportation safety through education and advocacy, by increasing access to information, and by building partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government, and industry that result in safer communities and a healthier environment. The **Pipeline Safety Trust** was established in 2003 from part of the criminal fines imposed as a result of the June 1999 Olympic Pipe Line rupture in Bellingham, Washington, which resulted in the deaths of three youths.